

SHAVANO CREEK**Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics****Area Unique Identifier:** Shavano Creek**Acreage:** 6,090**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below):**Yes ☒No ☐**Description**

This unit is just north of the congressionally designated Tabeguache Area. They are separated by Montrose County Road V24, and therefore are not adjacent.

The unit is bounded as follows:

- On the south by Montrose County Road V24;
- On the east by vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping), private land and US Forest Service land;
- On the north by vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping), private land, and US Forest Service land; and
- On the west by Montrose County Roads Z26 and U472, and associated roadside disturbances.

The inventory included lands in upper Campbell Creek drainage north and west of Road U475 up to Road U472 in West Campbell Creek. During field inspection it was noted that Road U475 was originally mechanically constructed (likely by bulldozer), and since it provides the only access for maintenance of a stock pond, it will continue to be mechanically maintained. In 2004 the Campbell Creek Fire burned through the area. Now trees burnt in that fire are starting to drop across the road and will be cleared using chainsaws in order to continue to maintain the stock pond. Because of this, U475 meets the definition of "road" for the purpose of the wilderness characteristics inventory, and therefore the lands in upper Campbell Creek were not included in this unit.

There is a range access route that enters the unit from the west side off of Montrose County Road Z26. It runs northeast, adjacent to Shavano Creek, and terminates about 2.5 miles in. The route was mechanically constructed (likely by bulldozer), but is no longer used by full-size vehicles. There is evidence of some ATV use, likely for range-management and/or hunting purposes. There is no sign of mechanical maintenance of this route, and it is becoming an ATV trail rather than a full-size vehicle route. Since this route does not meet the definition of a "road" for the purposes of this wilderness characteristics inventory, it was left in the unit rather than being cherry-stemmed out.

A two mile long vehicle route enters the unit from Montrose County Road V24 along the southern boundary of the unit. Both ends of the route terminate at Road V24. The route was originally mechanically constructed (likely by bulldozer) but for the most part has not been maintained in many years. There is a stock pond which is accessed from the western terminus of the route about 0.3 miles in. The road is passable by full size vehicle to this point, and is maintained for access for pond maintenance. Other than that section the route has severely slumped and eroded to the point that it is impassable, even to an ATV. Therefore the only section that meets the wilderness characteristics definition of "road" is the western 0.3 miles. That section is cherry-stemmed out of the unit.

Even though the remainder of this unit is 4,900 acres (100 acres shy of the 5,000 acre minimum guideline) it is very close (98%), and is of sufficient size to make practicable its management in an unimpaired condition.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

Description

Although the unit does contain the two vehicle routes described under Question 1, neither is substantially noticeable in the unit as a whole. Where the ATV trail parallels Shavano Creek, it is clearly noticeable to an observer hiking in the drainage, but in the unit as a whole it is substantially unnoticeable.

The unit provides for important habitat continuity especially for seasonal wildlife migration. The upper end of the unit is around 7,000 feet in elevation and connects with even higher elevation forest lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau, while the lower end of the unit drains into Tabeguache Creek, which in turn connects with the San Miguel and Dolores Rivers.

Most of the unit is covered in pinyon-juniper forest, with some ponderosa pine in the upper reaches and cottonwoods and willows in the riparian areas of Shavano Creek. In 2004, the Campbell Creek wildfire burned through the upper reaches in the northeast portion of the unit. There are many standing-dead trees that were burnt in the fire, with a robust understory of grasses, forbs and sagebrush. Although it is obvious that a fire burned through that area, since wildfire is a natural phenomenon it is still natural in appearance.

(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

Description

The unit lies in a remote, lightly populated area of western Colorado, far from metropolitan areas.

The topography is moderately steep throughout much of the unit. The exception being the upper reaches of the Campbell Canyon burn, which is gently undulating terrain.

Both the topography and rather dense pinyon-juniper forest provide ample screening for visitors to the area. The exception to this again is the Campbell Canyon burn area in the northeast portion of the unit, where there is not much in the way of either. Opportunities for solitude are outstanding throughout the unit, regardless of screening because visitation to the area is very light. This is partially due to the fact that road access along much of the boundary does not exist or goes through private property with locked gates.

Sights, sounds or evidence of other people are rare in this unit.

(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

Description

There does not appear to be much recreational use of this area at all. The recreational use that does occur seems to be concentrated near the boundary roads. With its proximity to the more dramatic landscape and more dependable water sources of the Tabeguache Area, this area is unlikely to become a recreational destination.

There are no developed recreational facilities in the unit.

Except for the one ATV trail, all access to this unit is by non-motorized/non-mechanized means.

There are abundant opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Opportunities for non-motorized/non-mechanized hunting in this unit are outstanding.

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

Description

This area provides important habitat connectivity between the higher elevation forested lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau at the northeast end of the unit and the lower elevation lands to the southwest.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS***Area Unique Identifier:** Shavano Creek**Results of analysis:**

This unit is just north of the congressionally designated Tabeguache Area. They are separated by Montrose County Road V24, and therefore are not adjacent.

1,190 acres were excluded from the initial inventory area when it was found that Road U475 is a constructed and maintained road, and therefore formed a new boundary for the unit. That left 4,900 acres that possess wilderness characteristics.

Even though the remainder of this unit is 100 acres shy of the 5,000 acre minimum guideline it is very close (98%), and is of sufficient size to make practicable its management in an unimpaired condition.

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Check one:

☒ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

☐ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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***This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-3.**